



Senior Pastor Kevin Flannery

Series: *The Word of God Continues to Spread and Flourish*

Sermon Title: *Choreographed Chaos – Acts 22:22-23:35*

Big Idea: God's unstoppable purpose moves forward through His sovereign care, even in chaos.

Fall Term – Week 8 of 12

Opening Prayer & Icebreaker: What's an example of something that looked like a failure at first but turned out to be part of a bigger plan?

Read and Reflect on Acts 22:22-23:35

²² The crowd listened to Paul until he said this. Then they raised their voices and shouted, "Rid the earth of him! He's not fit to live!"
²³ As they were shouting and throwing off their cloaks and flinging dust into the air, ²⁴ the commander ordered that Paul be taken into the barracks. He directed that he be flogged and interrogated in order to find out why the people were shouting at him like this. ²⁵ As they stretched him out to flog him, Paul said to the centurion standing there, "Is it legal for you to flog a Roman citizen who hasn't even been found guilty?"²⁶ When the centurion heard this, he went to the commander and reported it. "What are you going to do?" he asked. "This man is a Roman citizen."²⁷ The commander went to Paul and asked, "Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?" "Yes, I am," he answered.²⁸ Then the commander said, "I had to pay a lot of money for my citizenship." "But I was born a citizen," Paul replied.²⁹ Those who were about to interrogate him withdrew immediately. The commander himself was alarmed when he realized that he had put Paul, a Roman citizen, in chains.³⁰ The commander wanted to find out exactly why Paul was being accused by the Jews. So the next day he released him and ordered the chief priests and all the members of the Sanhedrin to assemble. Then he brought Paul and had him stand before them.²³ Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." ² At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. ³ Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!"⁴ Those who were standing near Paul said, "How dare you insult God's high priest!"⁵ Paul replied, "Brothers, I did not realize that he was the high priest; for it is written: 'Do not speak evil about the ruler of your people.'"⁶ Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." ⁷ When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. ⁸ (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.)
⁹ There was a great uproar, and some of the teachers of the law who were Pharisees stood up and argued vigorously. "We find nothing wrong with this man," they said. "What if a spirit or an angel has spoken to him?" ¹⁰ The dispute became so violent that the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them. He ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force and bring him into the barracks.¹¹ The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, "Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome."¹² The next morning some Jews formed a conspiracy and bound themselves with an oath not to eat or drink until they had killed Paul. ¹³ More than forty men were involved in this plot. ¹⁴ They went to the chief priests and the elders and said, "We have taken a solemn oath not to eat anything until we have killed Paul. ¹⁵ Now then, you and the Sanhedrin petition the commander to bring him before you on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about his case. We are ready to kill him before he gets here."¹⁶ But when the son of Paul's sister heard of this plot, he went into the barracks and told Paul.¹⁷ Then Paul called one of the centurions and said, "Take this young man to the commander; he has something to tell him." ¹⁸ So he took him to the commander. The centurion said, "Paul, the prisoner, sent for me and asked me to bring this young man to you because he has something to tell you."¹⁹ The commander took the young man by the hand, drew him aside and asked, "What is it you want to tell me?"²⁰ He said: "Some Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul before the Sanhedrin tomorrow on the pretext of wanting more accurate information about him. ²¹ Don't give in to them, because more than forty of them are waiting in ambush for him. They have taken an oath not to eat or drink until they have killed him. They are ready now, waiting for your consent to their request."²² The commander dismissed the young man with this warning: "Don't tell anyone that you have reported this to me."²³ Then he called two of his centurions and ordered them, "Get ready a detachment of two hundred soldiers, seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen to go to Caesarea at nine tonight. ²⁴ Provide horses for Paul so that he may be taken safely to Governor Felix."²⁵ He wrote a letter as follows:²⁶ Claudius Lysias, To His Excellency, Governor Felix: Greetings.²⁷ This man was seized by the Jews and they were about to kill him, but I came with my troops and rescued him, for I had learned that he is a Roman citizen. ²⁸ I wanted to know why they were accusing him, so I brought him to their Sanhedrin. ²⁹ I found that the accusation had to do with questions about their law, but there was no charge against him that deserved death or

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imprisonment. ³⁰ When I was informed of a plot to be carried out against the man, I sent him to you at once. I also ordered his accusers to present to you their case against him. ³¹ So the soldiers, carrying out their orders, took Paul with them during the night and brought him as far as Antipatris. ³² The next day they let the cavalry go on with him, while they returned to the barracks. ³³ When the cavalry arrived in Caesarea, they delivered the letter to the governor and handed Paul over to him. ³⁴ The governor read the letter and asked what province he was from. Learning that he was from Cilicia, ³⁵ he said, "I will hear your case when your accusers get here." Then he ordered that Paul be kept under guard in Herod's palace.

Sermon and Scripture Application Discussion:

God's Sovereignty Protects His Servant (Acts 22:22–29; Genesis 50:20)

1. In what ways do you see God's protection in Paul's story—even through unjust treatment and danger? How might God be using something in your background (education, experience, citizenship, or relationships) for His protective purposes today?
2. Why is it sometimes easier to see God's sovereignty *after* the fact rather than *during* the crisis? What practices can help us trust God's unseen hand when life feels out of control?

God's Purpose Directs His Witness (Acts 22:30–23:11; 2 Corinthians 5:7)

1. Paul faced hostility and confusion, yet Christ *stood near* to encourage him. What does this reveal about Jesus' presence in our own moments of discouragement? How can Christ's nearness give us courage when clarity fades?
2. Paul maintains a clear conscience and continues to proclaim the resurrection of Christ. How can integrity and a Christ-centered message help us bear faithful witness when we face misunderstanding/opposition?

God's Providence Advances His Mission (Acts 23:12–35)

God exposes hidden evil. God uses unlikely people. God's mission keeps moving forward.

1. Paul's nephew, a Roman commander, and a pagan governor all became instruments of God's plan. What does this teach us about how God uses ordinary or unlikely people to fulfill His purposes? How might your "ordinary obedience" this week be part of God's extraordinary plan?
2. Even when Paul was surrounded by enemies and uncertainty, God's providence was already at work behind the scenes. What are some "hidden" ways you've seen God working in your life recently? How can remembering God's past faithfulness strengthen your trust when you can't see what He's doing now?

Closing Prayer:

God's unstoppable purpose moves forward through His sovereign care—even in chaos. Invite your group to close in prayer, thanking God for His protection, direction, and providence, and asking for courage to trust His choreography in the chaos of life.

Faith in Action:

- November 11, 12 PM, Adult Fellowship Luncheon, Gym
- November 15, 12 PM, College Friendsgiving, Parsonage
- November 16, 11:45 AM, Concert of Prayer for India, Gym